



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## DISCUSSION

### CRIBBING AND THE USE OF PRINTED TRANSLATIONS: A REPLY TO MR. SKINNER

(*School Review*, September, 1910, pp. 488-90)

I should like to cross swords with Mr. Skinner, and ask him whether his difficulties can be solved in any other way than by a study of the mental processes concerned in the forlorn story which he details. It is certainly a grave situation which he exposes.

The teacher's aim, it appears, is to cultivate *Sprachgefühl*—sensing the meaning of a passage without the aid of the English equivalent. Mr. Skinner complains that his students are reluctant to cultivate *Sprachgefühl*; that they want to know the "English equivalent," and if they can get it at once, without turning over the pages of a dictionary, they are smart enough to save the time, "receiving as much credit as if they had worked with a dictionary."

And he proposes to stop this practice, by the threat of punishing such naughty boys, depriving them of credits if he finds entries in their copies of the text!

I know that in my own country there is still far too much of this crude, seventeenth-century pedagogy, but I rubbed my eyes when I found it issuing from an enlightened university in a western state of America.

Surely the entire blame rests with the teacher, who diligently trains his scholar to make these associations between the native and the foreign symbol, and then blames him because, most sensibly as it appears to me, he seconds his teacher's method by making the association as perceptual as possible. Mr. Skinner deplores that a scholar scribbles *house* on the margin in order to remember that he must say *house* when he sees *Haus*. Now, does Mr. Skinner want his scholars to consider the American *house* to be the equivalent of the German *Haus*, and perhaps the American *housewife* as translatable into the German *Hausfrau*? If he does, he is not teaching them German, as Germans feel it or think it; he is not teaching *Sprachgefühl* at all, but the very opposite. The "mental degeneracy" he deplores is not a fault of his scholars, but a direct result of false principles of foreign-language acquirement, starting with the very first lesson. If we desire our pupils to feel and think when reading German as the native feels and thinks (this, of course, is what is meant by *Sprachgefühl*), we must lay the foundation for this achievement by starting *from the outset* with direct association between foreign symbol and foreign idea, and com-

pel the association between foreign symbol and native symbol to sink first to the margin of consciousness and then below the threshold entirely.

I need hardly labor the point. These principles of direct association were empirically taught many years ago in the United States by Fräulein Wenckebach and many other distinguished instructors; from them I pass on to Vietor, Max Walter, and other German teachers, who since those days have given a scientific basis to these "direct" principles by referring them to the familiar and inevitable laws of suggestion and habit. With all deliberation I can assert that there is no question here of "the natural inertia and sloth of our academic youth," but of the inertia and sloth of the academic teacher who declines to study mental process and then complains that the literal translation habits fostered in the elementary course in German refuse to blossom out into *Sprachgefühl*! There is no surer evidence of failure in teaching than to display contempt for the sloth or stupidity of young people. Our predecessors in the old days flogged the boys who "cribbed"; we are now reduced to scolding them!

I will not take up your space by arguing the problem in detail. There can be very little doubt that in days to come it will be a sign of degeneracy in any university department of modern languages if the instructor is compelled to employ the native tongue of his scholars during class hours.

One deplorable result of the difficulties encountered by this neglect of reform is exposed in the last paragraph of Mr. Skinner's communication: his scholars are not to be permitted access to the best "modern material" because such works are sure to be translated! And he mourns that he cannot put an embargo on our classic English renderings of Lessing, Goethe, and Schiller! He may rest assured that if he will train his scholars scientifically to think directly in German they will not *want* to translate either modern material or the earlier classics, but will delight themselves in real reading of *foreign literature*; and the only dictionary they will care to use will be one of the character described in a subsequent page of the September issue (Sanders' *Wörterbuch*). Such an achievement is in no way remarkable. It can be witnessed in all good secondary schools on the Continent: best of all, no doubt, in Holland, Belgium, Denmark, and Sweden, where a decent mastery of foreign literature is essential to culture; and the same can be seen in a few English schools where skilled teachers have adopted thoroughgoing principles of reform. What astonishes myself, as an outsider, is to find that in the United States, where the teacher is so free from the bondage of tradition and in other spheres so ready to undertake investigation, this refusal to apply the commonplaces of psychology to the teacher's work should still be in evidence.

It may be that my downright criticism will provoke the anger of teachers of repute. I have before me the Report of a distinguished Committee on Modern Languages (*United States Commissioner's Report*, 1897-98, chap.

xxvi), but it is not too much to say that the psychology underlying that Report (I refer particularly to sec. iiii) would not be accepted today in any reputable university. It is remarkable that such an important document was drafted without a survey of the results accomplished on the continent of Europe, and still more remarkable that no attempt was made at expert psychological analysis of the mode in which thousands of immigrants enter the United States and acquire English year by year without any assistance from instructors. If there are laws of mind at all which control this operation, such laws cannot be banished from the school, however diligently they may be ignored by the academies. And much has been witnessed since that Report was issued: both psychology and pedagogy have made rapid advances. I venture to think that if a dozen educated laymen, or teachers not committed to traditional views, were to undertake a survey into the results of modern-language teaching in Europe, the Report of 1898 would be discarded.

I have been moved to join in this discussion because Mr. Skinner's communication affords the most striking *exposé* of the failure of the "old school" that I have met with for a long time; and I must apologize if my hasty reflections have been expressed with undue animation.

J. J. FINDLAY

THE UNIVERSITY  
MANCHESTER, ENGLAND